



## AmeriCorps Works in Wisconsin

**Release Date:** March 7, 2012

**Contact:** Ashley Huibregtse, 608-224-5002

**Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** AmeriCorps Week is March 10-18, 2012. This story features a Wisconsin AmeriCorps Farm to School member, Magdalen Dale.

MADISON – *AmeriCorps Works* is the theme of AmeriCorps Week 2012 taking place across the nation from Saturday, March 10 through Sunday, March 18, 2012. Magdalen Dale, an AmeriCorps Farm to School member serving the Ashland, Washburn and Bayfield School Districts, would be the first to tell you why AmeriCorps works so well.

"As a community outreach member, I am able to help make connections between school food service directors and farmers that may not always be possible otherwise," said Dale. "Because of AmeriCorps Farm to School in northern Wisconsin, students will have increased access to local foods and farmers will have a new market to sell their products."

AmeriCorps Farm to School is a program of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) that builds healthy communities by providing educational activities to students and connecting schools with local farmers and food businesses. DATCP currently has 17 AmeriCorps Farm to School members at seven partner-sites impacting 22 school districts.

Dale began her position with AmeriCorps Farm to School in September 2011. She graduated from Oberlin College with degrees in English and women's studies. After spending several years in Chicago, she returned home to Bayfield to become part of her parent's blueberry farm. Now as an AmeriCorps member, she is able to balance her time between the busy season on the farm and the schools.

Dale started the school year by surveying farmers to identify their interest and ability to sell local produce to the schools. She then took this information to the food service directors at each school and had them indicate what items they would be most interested in purchasing in what quantities so the farmers could plant their fields accordingly.

"If projections are realized, the Bayfield School District will spend 10% of their food budget on locally-grown foods for the first three months of the school year and the Washburn School District will continue to bring in the largest harvest in the region from their school garden," described Dale. "In the Ashland School District, a locally-produced fruit or vegetable will be served to 900 students at least once a week from September through January. This is all thanks to AmeriCorps Farm to School."

Each year, there is a nationally-recognized AmeriCorps Week to highlight the impact of the program. AmeriCorps Farm to School is just one service option for members. Currently, there are more than 1,700 AmeriCorps members serving to meet education, environmental, health, economic and other pressing needs across Wisconsin. Dale sees the difference AmeriCorps makes every day in her work.

"The teachers and administrators have a great enthusiasm for the new curriculum that outlines ways to incorporate the school garden and local produce into their lessons," explained Dale. "I have really enjoyed getting to know school staff, community advocates and the farmers in our region better as we work together to achieve the goals of the Farm to School program. As an AmeriCorps member, I can be the catalyst that connects all of these entities, helping to form relationships that will be productive even when my service term is over."

-MORE-



Magdalen Dale (far left) and Brittany Schmitt, AmeriCorps Farm to School members, work with students in the Junior Master Gardener's Club at Bayfield School.

Other AmeriCorps Farm to School members serving this school year include: Kathleen Hein and Kate Maxfield (Crawford County); Mary Ann Letten and Brenday Thyssen (Waupaca County); Meghan Heitman (Vernon County); Krista Engelhardt (Portage County); Nora Jungbluth, Lihlani Skipper, Ally Miller and Tamara Baker (Dane County); Amarin Mello, Emily Schmidt and Brittany Schmitt (Ashland, Washburn and Bayfield School Districts); and Amy Young and Robin Heier (Spooner School District). Dale highly recommends others across Wisconsin add their names to the list next year.

“AmeriCorps Farm to School allowed me to take something I was passionate about to the next level and serve my community in a meaningful way,” concluded Dale. “I encourage people looking for a service opportunity to pursue an AmeriCorps program that matches your interest and then make it your own.”

AmeriCorps Farm to School continues to collect applications for partner-sites across Wisconsin for the 2012-2013 school year. For more information about the program, visit

[http://datcp.wi.gov/Business/Buy\\_Local\\_Buy\\_Wisconsin/Farm\\_to\\_School\\_Program/](http://datcp.wi.gov/Business/Buy_Local_Buy_Wisconsin/Farm_to_School_Program/) or contact

Camilla Vargas, Program Manager, at 608-224-5117 or [Camilla.vargas@wi.gov](mailto:Camilla.vargas@wi.gov). You can also connect with DATCP on Twitter at [twitter.com/widatcp](https://twitter.com/widatcp) or Facebook at [facebook.com/widatcp](https://facebook.com/widatcp).

###